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## Final Report

ONR Grant N00014-10-1-0104

### **"Mercy or Wrath: The Competing Ideologies of Sufism and Wahhabism in North Africa and the Sahel"**

**Ricardo René Larémont**

**SUNY Binghamton**

#### **General Findings**

The research sponsored by this ONR grant examined the issue of whether Sufi Islam, especially when sponsored and encouraged by governments in North Africa and the Sahel, would provide a more pacifist and moderate alternative to Salafi or Wahhabi Islam, which has a more radical and anti-Western orientation.

Research was undertaken principally in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia and secondarily in Mali. Research methods involved the use of surveys, which were originally distributed among the general populace. Later during the research term we decided to focus upon the use of youth surveys because this population was the largest and most dynamic demographic sector. Besides using surveys, researchers employed focus groups and in-depth interviews to elicit information that would elaborate upon the data obtained in our surveys.

Our conclusions based upon our research in Morocco, Mali, Algeria, and Tunisia are that the governmental encouragement of Sufism as a moderate alternative to Salafism and Wahhabism has met with substantial success in Morocco and Mali, with incomplete success in Algeria, and it was irrelevant in Tunisia. To explicate our findings, our combined survey data and historical research led us to conclude that while Sufism could be used by governments to encourage moderate alternatives to Salafism or Wahhabism, such governmental efforts would meet with greater success if there had been a longer experience with Sufi traditions within the country. Sufi practices have been part of a longer religious tradition in Morocco and Mali, which anchors both their practices and their comparatively more moderate outlook throughout society. In Algeria, by contrast, the practice of Sufism was first rendered disreputable by alleged Sufi leader collaboration with the French colonial regime and secondly when Sufism was actively discouraged by Algeria's first set of postcolonial leaders. While President Bouteflika (the present Algerian president) has actively promoted Sufism as an alternative to Salafism and Wahhabism, his efforts have met with a lukewarm reception by many elements of the populace for whom Sufism now seems an anachronistic practice. Last, our data reveal that Tunisia's forced experience with secularism under the regimes of Presidents Bourguiba and Ben Ali seems to have created a post-Arab Spring social and political environment where two irreconcilable religious and ideological trends manifest themselves (secularism versus Salafism/Wahhabism), with little middle ground exiting for the reconciliation of these divergent worldviews.

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### Articles Published

"Sufism, Salafism, and State Policy Towards Religion in Algeria:  
A Survey of Algerian Youth. With Hamidi Khemissi and Taybi Taj Eddine.  
*The Journal of North African Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (2012): 547-558. 2012

Demographics, Economics, and Technology: 2012  
Background to the North African Revolutions."  
*The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, Vol. 3, No.1 (2012): 3-17.

"Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb: 2011  
Terrorism and Counterterrorism in the Sahel."  
*African Security*. Vol. 4 (2011): 242-268.

"Moroccan Youth Go Sufi." With Khalid Bekkaoui. 2011  
*The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*. Vol. 2, No.1 (2011): 31-46.

"Survey on Moroccan Youth: 2011  
Perception and Participation in Sufi Orders." With Khalid Bekkaoui and Sadik Rddad.  
*The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*. Vol. 2, No.1 (2011): 47-63.

### Articles Pending

"A Post- Revolution Survey of Youth in Tunisia: Views on Religion, Politics, and  
Family." With Amira Aleya-Sghaier, Mohamed Dhifallah, and Salem Labiedh."  
Under review at the *Journal of North African Studies*.

"Moroccan Youth in the Age of the Arab Spring: Perceptions of Domestic Politics,  
Religion, Gender and International Politics." With Khalid Bekkaoui.  
Under review at the *Journal of North African Studies*.

### Special Edition of a Journal Published

"Special Edition on the North African Revolutions." 2012  
With J. Peter Pham.  
*The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, Vol. 3 (2012)

**Book Published**

*Al-rabia al-arabi: al-intifada, w'al-islah, wa'l thawra:* 2013  
 [The Arab Spring: Revolt, Reform, and Revolution]  
 With Youssef Sawani.  
 Al-Maaref. (Beirut)

**Book in Production (to be published August 2013)**

*Revolution, Revolt, and Reform in North Africa: The Arab Spring and Beyond.* 2013  
 Routledge. (London)

**Book Chapter Published**

"Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb." 2011  
 In Norman Cigar and Stephanie Kramer, eds.  
*Al-Qaida after Ten Years of War.* Marine Corps University Press.

Among the objectives of US government sponsored research is to have that research have an impact in the public sphere. In the pursuit of that objective, I provided public lectures, gave testimony at legislative hearings, and provided briefings for the US government, the European Union, the French government, and the Moroccan government.

**Conference Presentations**

Demographics, Economics, and Technology: 12 October 2012  
 Background to the North African Revolutions."  
 Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa.  
 Arlington, VA.

"Demographics, Economics, and Technology: 25 February 2012  
 Background to the North African Revolutions."  
 New York African Studies Association  
 Pennsylvania State University. State College, Pennsylvania

"Le Sahel: Les vulnérabilités et les nouveaux facteurs de l'inécurité." 21 January 2012  
 Marrakech Security Conference. Marrakech, Morocco

"Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: 4 November 2011  
 Terrorism and Counterterrorism Initiatives."  
 Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa.  
 Arlington, VA.

"La fragmentation d'Al Qaida au Maghreb Islamique." 20 January 2011  
Marrakech Security Conference. Marrakech, Morocco.

"Tribalism and Ethnicity Research in North and West Africa." 7 December 2010  
University of South Florida. St. Petersburg, FL.

#### **Invited Lectures**

"Nation Building and State Building in Africa." 19 March 2013  
Army War College. Carlisle, PA.

"Managing the Crisis in Mali and the Sahel." February 2013  
Atlantic Council. Washington, DC

"The Nigerian Boko Haram Movement- 7 September 2012  
Islamism and Ideological Trends."  
George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies,  
Garmich-Partenkirchen, Germany

"The Origins of Boko Haram as a Terrorist Organization." 17 April 2012  
Navanti/Interagency Workshop, Washington, DC

"Boko Haram, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and Al Shabab." 30 November 2011  
United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security, Washington, DC

"U.S. Foreign Policy in North Africa 3 June 2011  
after the Death of Osama bin Laden."  
Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, DC

"Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb: 26 April 2011  
Terrorism and Counterterrorism in the Sahel."  
Marine Corps University. Washington, DC.

"The Role of Islam and Radicalization in the Trans-Sahel Region." 15 March 2011  
United States Army Africa Command. Vicenza, Italy

"Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and the Tuareg Tribes." 4 February 2011  
National Counterterrorism Center. Maclean, VA.

"Radical Islam in Nigeria." 15 June 2010  
Canadian Security Intelligence Service. Ottawa, CA.

"Radical Islam in Nigeria." 18 May 2010  
European Commission. Brussels, Belgium.

"Political Islam in Africa."  
European Commission. Brussels, Belgium.

17 May 2010

